

**EXPERIENCE  
CAPITALIZATION**

# ***PATHWAYS TO RURAL YOUTH AGRIBUSINESS SUCCESS***

**STORIES FROM THE VIJABIZ PROJECT**

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**13**



This booklet is produced by the Youth Economic Empowerment through Agribusiness in Kenya (Vijabiz) project, implemented by CTA and USTADI Foundation from Kenya and supported by IFAD. The stories are produced following an exercise which used the model of the experience capitalization process.

The “Capitalization of Experiences for Greater Impact in Rural Development” project is implemented by CTA in different parts of the world, in collaboration with the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO) and the Inter-American Institute for Cooperation on Agriculture (IICA), and with financial support from IFAD, the International Fund for Agricultural Development. This project aims to facilitate the adoption of an experience capitalization process in rural development initiatives, where it can help improve the analysis, documentation, sharing, and the adoption and use of lessons and good practices – as an approach for continuous learning, improvement and scaling up.

The cases featured in this booklet were selected and written by those participating in the Vijabiz project. Responsibility for the information and views set out in each case lies entirely with the authors. Reproduction is authorised provided the source is acknowledged.

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The Technical Centre for Agricultural and Rural Cooperation (CTA) is a joint international institution of the African, Caribbean and Pacific (ACP) Group of States and the European Union (EU). CTA operates under the framework of the Cotonou Agreement and is funded by the EU. For more information on CTA, visit [www.cta.int](http://www.cta.int)

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CTA, USTADI, 2020. Pathways to rural youth agribusiness success: Stories from the Vijabiz project. Experience Capitalization Series 13. Wageningen, the Netherlands, CTA.

ISBN 978-92-9081-671-3

Photos: Vijabiz project



# INTRODUCTION

## **Capitalising the mid-term experience of Vijabiz project**

Youth constitutes about 30% of the Kenyan population and 60% of the total labour force, with one million youth entering the labour market annually (Kenya Country Report on Youth Employment, 2014). The 2013 UNDP Kenya's Youth Employment Challenge<sup>1</sup> report revealed 64% of the unemployed Kenyans as youth, which is a critical concern for the country.

Agriculture, accounting for 65% of Kenya's annual exports and contributing 24% to the gross domestic product (GDP) represents a key sector for job creation for rural youth in Kenya. It is thus targeted as one of the key sectors by the Vision 2030 agenda of the Kenyan Government to deliver a 10% annual economic growth rate. The cereal, dairy and fisheries value chains are important in creating economic opportunities for the rural youth in Kenya and contributing to the anticipated economic growth. The dairy sub-sector for instance accounts for 14% of the agricultural GDP and up to 8% of the national GDP. However, the negative mindset of the youth regarding agriculture, the lack of access to finance, the lack of entrepreneurship capacity and weak value addition activities limit the potential of job creation through thriving youth agribusinesses.

In view of the above, the Technical Centre for Agricultural and Rural Cooperation (CTA) and USTADI Foundation launched the Youth Economic Empowerment through Agribusiness in Kenya (Vijabiz) project in May 2018. The project which is mainly funded by the International Fund for Agricultural Development (IFAD) with co-funding by CTA and USTADI is aimed at creating sustainable employment for the rural youth in Kenya through active engagement in agribusiness for wealth creation and poverty reduction.

Specifically, the project is focussed on building entrepreneurship and ICT capacity, creating market linkages, facilitating value addition and innovative access to finance for at least 160 youth agribusiness groups and at least 2250 individual youths (with 53% being females) in the cereal, dairy and fishery value chains in Kilifi and Nakuru counties in Kenya.

The Vijabiz project employs a variety of strategies to achieve the targeted outcomes, among which include training in entrepreneurship and ICT for agribusiness, incubation and mentorship and competitive grant schemes for youth agribusiness groups. One key strategy of the project is capitalization of experiences and the subsequent documentation and publication of lessons learnt by youth beneficiaries of the project as a way of inspiring other youths within and outside of Kenya. To this effect, a workshop on experience capitalization was organised by the Vijabiz project in Nairobi, Kenya from 13<sup>th</sup> to 16<sup>th</sup> of August 2019, attended by selected beneficiary youth groups, mentors and consultants working with the project. Training on experience capitalization was led by Jorge Chavez-Tafur, Project Coordinator at the Learning, Monitoring and Evaluation unit of CTA. It was aimed at:

- Presenting the experience capitalization methodology (developed within the framework of another IFAD-funded project implemented by CTA/IFAD/FAO) and training youth and partner organisations attending the event on how it can be applied to the Vijabiz project
- Applying the methodology to capture some of the project's mid-term results from the point of view of youth groups and partners
- Facilitating the drafting of stories by participants on their experiences and lessons learnt
- Facilitating the preparation, at the end of the project, of its final results and the sharing of lessons learnt and innovations.

The different cases or stories presented in this booklet are the results from the experience capitalization exercise and give insights into the specific lessons learnt by the workshop participants, through analysis of their involvement in diverse activities of the Vijabiz project and the influence on their businesses. Each case authored by an individual or group of individual representatives of youth groups or partner involved highlights the peculiar challenges the youth faced, the hope offered by the Vijabiz project and the corresponding outcomes. These are organised into four sections: women empowerment, ICT and mentorship; and specific cases in the dairy, cereals and fisheries value chains.

We hope that this initiative could provide an inspirational reading for youth agribusinesses and institutions involved in youth agribusiness programming.

1 [https://www.undp.org/content/undp/en/home/librarypage/poverty-reduction/inclusive\\_development/kenya\\_s-youth-employment-challenge.html](https://www.undp.org/content/undp/en/home/librarypage/poverty-reduction/inclusive_development/kenya_s-youth-employment-challenge.html)



**Ken Lohento**  
CTA, Vijabiz Project Manager



**George Mazuri**  
USTADI, Vijabiz Project  
Coordinator

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**1**

***WOMEN  
EMPOWERMENT,  
ICT AND  
MENTORSHIP***

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# ENHANCING RURAL YOUNG WOMEN'S ENGAGEMENT IN AGRIBUSINESS

*Mishi Boraafya Omar, Sylvia Madenje  
and Emily Cheruiyot*





Three women's youth groups featured in this article are empowering women to venture into agribusiness. In the Vijabiz project they acquired knowledge that helped improve their activities such as buying and selling of fish and cereals as well as improving their marketing skills and access to funds. Their products are now sold to schools, hotels, supermarkets and their communities. Their level of organisation and sharing one vision helped in the writing of business plans. They now employ women in the businesses, supplying them with a regular income. Since these women are truly invested in succeeding, they are goal-oriented and serious about proper implementation.

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*Cover Young women involved in learning tours to gain new agribusiness knowledge and skills*

Often, women do not get the same chances as men and this has negative consequences for them, their families and communities. Usually, girls are not given equal opportunities for education. One reason is that women and girls are considered as home assets. However, through the Vijabiz project we have learnt that both men and women can and should be given the same opportunities. This is why we are making efforts to continue empowering more women to venture into agribusiness activities to support them in earning a living.

We have seen results in terms of the empowerment of women in three youth groups: Blessing Hand Youth Group in Kapkures ward in Nakuru county, Saidia Young Mothers Self-Help Group in Mwarakara ward in Kilifi county and Mayungu High Vision Women Group in Watamu ward, also in Kilifi county. As representatives of these groups, we attended the various Vijabiz trainings. In these trainings, we learnt about marketing, ICT and building a business. Thirty-six women were present of which 12 continued to train other women through the women's groups in their areas.

In the Vijabiz training we acquired knowledge which enabled us to improve our activities in agribusiness, such as buying and selling of fish and cereals as well as improving our marketing skills and access to funds.

The trainers from the company *Demand Link Business Solutions* made the training interactive and we are proud to have gained these useful skills. After the training we returned to our respective groups and shared what we had learnt with other women. This empowered them to engage further in agribusiness, including the production, buying, packaging and selling of cereal products and fish. Our products are sold to schools, hotels, supermarkets and the community at large.

### **The story of Sylvia**

The story of one of us, Sylvia Madenje, is a good example of how being part of the youth group can transform the lives of women in our areas. At 22 years old now, she has turned her life around. As part of a family of seven children, Sylvia dropped out of school towards the end of primary school. Her family situation required her to serve as parent to her siblings by providing for them. "Then I got married early, believing that by becoming somebody's wife all problems would be gone. I did not realise that more problems were running after me. After giving birth, my husband left me. I decided to fight for my life and that of my child. I realised that I was surely not the only one, so I decided to look for other women with similar problems, and we formed a group of 15 ladies with an objective of changing everyone's life."

Most of the women in the group, aged between 18-24 years old, had dropped out of school. “We are committed to fight for women’s empowerment,” Sylvia says, “knowing that we would not have dropped out of school if our mothers had been better off. This happened because in our area a girl is considered a house asset, but we don’t want to be seen like that. We want to be change agents in our communities.”

In the Saidia Young Mothers group, the members started using a system of ‘table banking’, where all members contribute to a common fund which can be used by individual members when needed. Sylvia asked for a loan from the group which helped her start a small business. After seeing positive changes in her life, she urged other women to join their group. A training course by the Red Cross Kenya and the trainings by Vijabiz supported Sylvia, exposing her to knowledge on how to market her own and her group’s activities. “So far my life has completely changed. Even though it is not completely stable, it is better than the way it was. I do believe in myself and in the quote that change starts with me. I started alone and during the journey I was joined by others.”

### **Access to finances and markets**

The group savings and loans system implemented in all three groups allows all of our members to borrow money with an interest rate of 10%. Not only do we have direct access to fund in our own groups, but our demonstrated capacity to run activities like this table banking has allowed us to have active bank accounts and has linked us to other (larger) financial institutions. Our level of organisation and having a common vision has enabled us to write business plans, with the help of the financial management trainings by Vijabiz. In addition, we have assets such as fridges, tailoring machines, and branding and



packaging machines, giving financial institutions the confidence to support the groups as we expand our businesses.

All 36 women are actively marketing their businesses within and beyond our communities. We use posters and social media, and by improving our packaging have made our products more attractive to customers. The women in our groups are persuasive, easily convincing our customers to buy the produce. We are courageous, undertaking marketing activities without fearing possible disappointing results. We take risks while having faith in our entrepreneurial skills. Of course, it helps that there is a ready market for our produce and a reliable supply of the products that we package and sell. Due to the availability of social media like WhatsApp and Facebook, we have been able to use these platforms to reach our customers. Yet illiteracy within the community is a persistent challenge we still face. One way we use social media is by posting photos of our products.

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*Above Young women participating in a trade show to acquire new agribusiness knowledge and market linkages*

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We have seen results in terms of the empowerment of women in three youth groups.... we learnt about building a business.

“In our area a girl is considered a house asset, but we don’t want to be seen like that. We want to be change agents in our communities.”

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Another positive result is that we are starting to employ women from our group in our businesses and supplying them with a regular income. In Mwarakara for example, the Saidia Group has employed two members in the cereal shop. It helps that some of the women volunteer to work regularly, even if paid employment is not completely possible yet. Still, the lack of experience can pose a bit of a challenge for official employment of members, as well as a lack of documents that can prove that the women are qualified for the position.

### **Conclusions**

Our three women’s groups have something special to show. Two groups are composed of women only, and Blessing Hand has a large majority of women. As these women have a lot to gain, as the example of Sylvia shows, the groups have high chances of having a long life span. Us women are truly invested in succeeding as such, we are goal-oriented, serious about proper implementation and we are like-minded. We thank Vijabiz for teaching young women about different business aspects. Our new entrepreneurship skills have enabled us to direct our drive to improve our lives into our businesses. We urge others to support women in engaging in agribusiness, despite low levels of education, that they can achieve more in life.



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**Mishi Boraafya Omar**  
Mayungu High Vision Women Group  
*E-mail: mboraafya@gmail.com*

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**Sylvia Madenje**  
Saidia Young Mothers Self-Help Group  
*E-mail: Sylviakuvuna1996@gmail.com /  
saidiaeducationcentre@gmail.com*

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**Emily Cheruiyot**  
Blessing Hand Youth Group  
*E-mail: Emilycheruiyot3@gmail.com*

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# ICTs STRENGTHENING YOUTH AGRIBUSINESSES

*Ken Lohento and Michael Kermah*



Following the organisation of training, digital technologies have been used by many youth groups of the Vijabiz project. Though these tools are generally not available in rural areas, some of them (social media, mobile phone, etc.) are increasingly being adopted by rural youth. The use of common but useful tools such as Excel (for records keeping) has also been promoted. Results of the training organised are already being identified.

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*Cover Training on ICTs in Kilifi with ICT4D*

It is contemporarily recognised that digital communication technologies can support the development of agribusiness, through an easier of access to input and output markets, quicker communication with potential clients, easier access to advisory information and services.

However, rural areas in Africa benefit less from these technologies because of various reasons including the

lack of modern infrastructure, the low purchasing power of rural households, the lack of electricity and the weaker education level or digital literacy in those areas. Only 7% of Kenyans living in rural areas have access to the internet, against nearly 26% urban dwellers, according to the 2010 National ICT (Information and Communication Technology) Survey Report by the Communication Authority of Kenya (CAK). The

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The baseline study undertaken by the Vijabiz project at its launch revealed that only 4% of the Vijabiz youth groups don't use any digital technologies at all, though the main usage is mobile money (45%) and basic communication.

statistics is better when we consider mobile phones as at least 60% of Kenyans living in rural areas have mobile phones according to the same study. This divide in use and access to new ICTs also illustrates that some use of ICTs is however possible.

The same survey revealed that rural and urban youth aged between 20 – 34 years dominate the usage and access to ICT equipment and facilities. For instance, approximately 80% of the youth have access to mobile phones and half use them to access the internet. These penetration rates are higher than the respective national averages of 60% and 34%. Ironically, most youth doing businesses are not capitalising on these to harness the opportunities for business growth offered by ICT, as less than 20% of the internet accessed by the youth are used for businesses.

There is thus relevance in attempting to support youths involved in agribusiness to better use these tools for agribusiness, which eventually can help them improve their livelihood opportunities. Access to internet is sometimes possible in community centers. As a matter of fact, the baseline study undertaken by the Vijabiz project at its launch revealed that only 4% of the Vijabiz youth groups don't use any digital technologies at all, though the main usage is mobile money (45%) and basic communication. Most of them were unaware that social media could be effectively used to promote their businesses and market their products.

Against this backdrop, the Vijabiz project has decided to strengthen the use of ICT by the youth groups as part of its activities. One of the key activities in this framework is the training sessions on ICT and social media use for agribusiness that the project organised.

### Training sessions in Nakuru and Kilifi

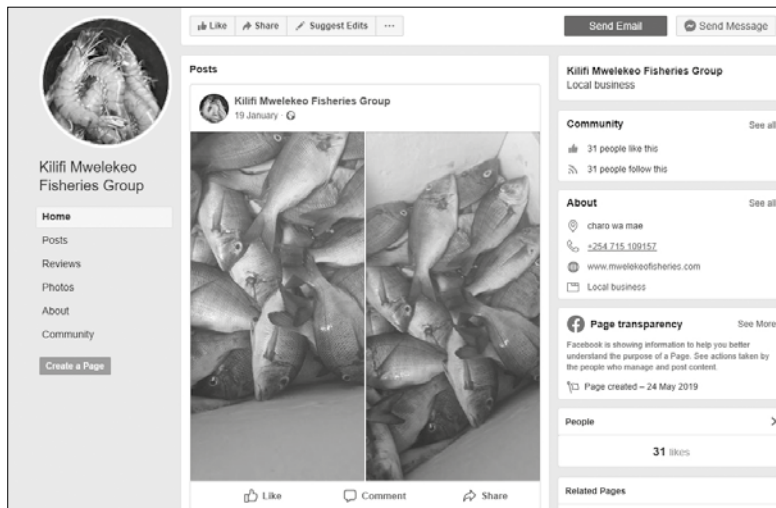
Through 12 training sessions held between March and April 2019, the project has built the capacities of representatives of 163 youth agribusiness groups involved in the project on ICT and social media for agribusiness. Leaders of youth groups as well as some of the members who can use ICT were targeted. The curriculum of the training was based on the award-winning Web2fordev and social media training curriculum developed and used by CTA. Before the training started, a training of trainers was held on 20 and 21 February 2019 at Mash Pack Hotel, Nairobi. Representatives of ICT for Development-Kenya (ICT4D-K) and Institute of Advanced Technology, the two firms that were selected to deliver the training in both counties, attended it. They were introduced to the adapted curriculum developed for USTADI and CTA by a Kenyan consultant. Delivery methodologies were harmonised.

The training curriculum included the following units:

- Introduction to ICT for agriculture, social media concepts and principles
- Finding information on the internet (online search, Google Alerts, etc.)
- Using social networking for agribusiness (Facebook, Twitter, etc.)
- Collaboration using online conversation (Hangout, Skype, etc.)
- Use of Google Drive

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Wazo Jema youth group that initially struggled with proper financial keeping, has now adopted a mobile application called 'My Cashbook' which they currently use for efficient record keeping, proper filing and printing Excel sheets.



*Above Snapshots of the social media platforms of some youth groups created after the ICT and social media for agribusiness training by the Vijabiz project*

- Record keeping using spreadsheets
- Remote collaboration using mailing lists in agribusiness
- Mobile applications in agriculture (with Kenyan examples).

In Kilifi, a total of 93 youths (47 male, 46 female) were trained while 223 youths (75 male and 147 female) attended the Nakuru training sessions. These activities were organised in collaboration with the county government in both regions.

The knowledge and skills gained have captivated the majority of the youth groups to open social media accounts (Facebook and Twitter particularly) and advanced their use of WhatsApp for promoting their businesses and marketing their products. Some youth groups, for instance the Grennthumb CBO based in Nakuru county, have even stepped up and created websites to further enhance the promotion and marketing of their businesses and products.

These initiatives and/or actions resulting from the ICT and social media training have improved the businesses of most youth groups cutting across dairy, cereal and fishery value chains, and produced diversified benefits. For example, Wazo Jema, Umoja, Tiger Group, Eaglesight, and Greenbelt youth groups have increased their volume of sales and income by tapping the potential of Facebook, Twitter and WhatsApp as online platforms for marketing products, creating market linkages and growing market reach beyond their communities. The groups brand their products, take quality photos and along with descriptions of the products, post them on those platforms. Interactions with customers through such platforms enable them to get feedback on their products and services, improve them, and then gain

trust which is relevant for further increasing their clients base, sales and for business growth.

Furthermore, some groups are now engaged in digital record keeping and enhancing efficiency and business management. Specifically, the Wazo Jema youth group based in Kilifi county that initially struggled with proper financial keeping, has now adopted a mobile application called 'My Cashbook' which they currently use for efficient record keeping, proper filing and printing Excel sheets when needed. Also, Greenthumb CBO after training by a Google Africa representative, presently has a 'Google My Business' account by which the location of their business with coordinates can be traced through Google Maps, enabling them gain more visibility for their business and enter new markets.

Despite these benefits, the youth groups are challenged by high costs of internet services (largely mobile data) and limited access to finance to offset such costs, poor network and connectivity particularly in the rural areas where most groups are based. The current low level of internet access in Kenya is also a limitation for the groups to rapidly increase their online customers.



**Ken Lohento**

Senior Programme Coordinator  
ICT4Ag, CTA

*E-mail: lohento@cta.int and lohento@iafrc.net*



**Michael Kermah**

Consultant ICT4Ag, CTA

*E-mail: kermah@cta.int*

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# RURAL YOUTH AGRIBUSINESS DEVELOPMENT THROUGH BUSINESS MENTORSHIP

Wilson Munene Karimi





CoELIB-Egerton University and Demand Link Business Solutions have been mentoring the 163 youth group beneficiaries of the Vijabiz project. Many youth groups have enhanced their entrepreneurial skills, identified niche markets and products and created jobs for themselves and other youths. The mentorship has also resulted in specific outcomes for some youth groups particularly direct access to finance, business growth and efficient financial management. As this is a continuous process, more specific outcomes will be captured using the dynamic monitoring and evaluation tool developed for that purpose.

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*Cover Many youth groups have been able to create new businesses*

Kenya is currently facing a ‘youth bulge’, which provides the country with a positive economic future if the young people are absorbed into employment or start their own businesses. Agriculture provides the highest potential to create employment and offers most of the informal jobs for the rural youth. However, this potential is untapped because most of the farmers are smallholders and practice subsistence farming, which make the youth see agriculture as an unattractive and dirty venture or business to participate in.

Through business development and mentorship, youth unemployment in the country can be reduced significantly as these will help in developing sustainable businesses that offer self-employment to the business owners and employment for other youths engaged in these new businesses. USTADI and CTA through the “Youth Economic Empowerment through Agribusiness in Kenya (Vijabiz)” project is supporting 163 youth groups doing business in the cereals, fisheries, dairy and poultry value chains in rural areas of Kilifi and Nakuru counties. CoELIB-Egerton University and Demand Link Business Solutions were contracted to offer business mentorship to the youth groups from March 2019 until the end of the project. Demand Link Business Solutions handles 111 groups (49 in Kilifi and 62 in Nakuru counties) while CoELIB mentors the remaining 52 groups in Naruku.

Two mentorship sessions are conducted per youth group every month. Mentors have engaged the groups on many issues including personal development, listening skills, leadership, group dynamics, market and marketing strategies, product development, prudent financial management and governance structures. Mentors share their experiences with mentees within the groups to grow other members and to grow their businesses. Through various tools developed for the mentorship, mentors explain and demonstrate to the mentees their specific roles and responsibilities for successful businesses. The youth are mentored to experience their positions as potential job providers and improve their understanding of their groups’ business outcomes.

During the mentorship sessions we noticed that groups that had issues with working as teams are now able to focus more on their ventures and increase their outputs. The mentorship sessions have assisted the majority of the youth groups to clearly understand the needs of the market and consumer psychographics in the cereals, dairy and fisheries value chains. We observed that most of the youth groups have further enhanced their entrepreneurial capacities, created market linkages and added value to their businesses which could contribute to increasing the volume of sales, income generation and improve rural livelihoods. Additionally, many

youth groups have been able to create new businesses and channels of operations, generally increased their production by over 50% in their respective value chains and created jobs for other youths to help them run their operations.

The mentorship programme has resulted in some specific initial outcomes spanning access to finance, enhanced business management and growth. For instance, lack of storage facility was identified as one of the key challenges faced by the Takaungu Boda Boda youth group based in Kilifi county and engaged in the fisheries value chain. The mentor thus linked them to MP Owen Baya and succeeded in accessing KSh 20,000 (USD 196) to acquire a freezer to advance their work. Also, the Mayugu Women Group was initially struggling to settle on a specific venture. Through the mentorship programme, the group has been able to focus on a specific venture in the fisheries value chain, opened a fish shop at Kijiwe Tanga in Kilifi County and currently uses the outlet to sell and preserve fresh fish from Mayugu Beach port where they source their fish from. The mentor also assisted the group to apply for the Uwezo fund loan. Similarly, Wazo Jema Group based in Bamba in Kilifi county was troubled by proper keeping of records. After participating in mentorship sessions

on financial management, the mentor introduced them to a mobile app known as 'My Cashbook' to aid them in keeping proper financial records. The group now uses the app to adequately keep financial records, print out Excel worksheet summarised by the app and then file them accordingly. As a result, the group currently has very comprehensive financial records that help them to track business expenses and manage their finances.

The mentorship programme is a continuous process and we envisage to document more specific outcomes as we proceed, especially using the monitoring and evaluation (M&E) tool developed by the Vijabiz project and the mentors. This mentorship M&E tool is a comprehensive and dynamic tool that captures detailed information on the mentorship process. The tool tracks changes in specific business performance indicators over time to allow for documentation of outcomes and impact of the mentorship on business growth and associated benefits for each youth group. The tool tracks indicators such as dynamics of group membership; business challenges discovered and addressed; baseline and current number of clients and business partners, products and services (especially value addition), volume of sales, expenditures and revenues and eventually changes

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CoELIB-Egerton University and Demand Link Business Solutions were contracted to offer business mentorship to the youth groups from March 2019 until the end of the project... Two mentorship sessions are conducted per youth group every month.

The mentorship M&E tool is a comprehensive and dynamic tool that captures detailed information on the mentorship process. The tool tracks changes in specific business performance indicators over time to allow for documentation of outcomes.

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in income. The tool also helps to monitor changes in job creation and access to finance of the youth groups over time. These then help to document business growth and related outcomes and/or impact.

Through the Vijabiz mentorship programme we have seen youth groups increasing their wealth, creation, employment opportunities and thus improving the economic conditions in their counties. This should be replicated in other counties to help the youth who have not yet been reached.



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**Wilson Munene Karimi,**  
Programme Administrator,  
CoELIB Centre, Egerton University  
*E-mail: wsnkrm@gmail.com*



**2**

# ***DAIRY VALUE CHAIN***

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# A MARKET FOR BAMBA'S DAIRY FARMERS

*Suleiman Jefwa, Ruth Kache and Peter Langat*



The Wazo Jema Youth Group started working in the dairy sector with the help of the Vijabiz project with the intention to make an income and to support local dairy farmers. They provide a market for these farmers to sell their milk, which they then process, test and sell. The group also trains farmers on crossbreeding, milk handling and finding markets for their milk. The success achieved by Wazo Jema serves as motivation and learning ground for other groups and youth in the region.

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*Cover A section of youth during a learning tour at the Olosian Dairy Farm where they learnt about best crossbred cows and production practices*

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*Right Youth exhibiting a variety of milk products during a market event organised by the project*

The Wazo Jema Youth Group is situated in the remote Bamba ward in Kilifi county in the south of Kenya. Wazo Jema (which means “a good idea”) started in February 2016 and counts a total of ten members (four women and six men). Before, Bamba’s dairy farmers had no market to sell their raw milk. The previous main buyer, a company from Nairobi,

had withdrawn from the coastal region, and large volumes of milk were getting spoiled every day. Then the Wazo Jema Youth Group came up with the idea of forming a dairy processing and marketing unit for the region, giving hope to the farmers.

### ***Youth in business***

In 2015 and 2016, milk production in the Bamba area was between 1500 and 2000 litres per day. This decreased to about 400 litres as a result of the drought between 2016 and 2017 when 80% of the cows died. The Bamba region has been experiencing severe droughts, and increasingly so due to climate change. It becomes harder and harder to keep a profitable dairy business going even though there is a demand for dairy products within and beyond the Bamba area. In addition, farmers face a lack of modern dairy facilities and equipment, poor infrastructure, a lack of expertise in the area and unstable sources of power. All these challenges become easier to manage with the right knowledge. Through the trainings Ustadi Foundation (ustadi being the Swahili word for ‘skillful’) and CTA provided in early 2019, the Wazo Jema group learnt about entrepreneurial skills – like bookkeeping, which helped for better business management. The ICT skills acquired from the trainings enabled the group to adopt modern marketing strategies.



With the support of CTA and Ustadi Foundation, Wazo Jema group got connected to the Vijabiz project funded largely by IFAD. The youths of Wazo Jema were not active in the dairy industry before but grew up in an area where livestock keeping is part of the culture. Bamba may have a harsh environment but there are also vast areas of land available for livestock grazing. Also, high unemployment in other (formal and informal) sectors encouraged youth to start looking towards agriculture.

With the help of Ustadi we acquired skills on dairy project management. The main reason behind this was to uplift the economic wellbeing of the community by creating a market for milk. Now the Wazo Jema Youth Group manages the only dairy processing unit in Bamba community and sells affordable processed milk products. The group also trains farmers on crossbreeding, milk handling and finding markets for their milk.

It helps that in Bamba raw milk is readily available and there is a trusting relationship between the group members and the farmers, which allows the business to run smoothly. Wazo Jema collects 100 liters of unpasteurised milk every day from individual farmers and dairy cooperatives, which we process to become 70 liters of yoghurt and 30 liters of *mala* (fermented milk). Farmers do not have the time to pasteurise their raw products, but the youth group does. We have testing equipment to assess the quality of the milk. We package and sell these products to local residents in the market and to local schools. Sales come easily, since there is a high demand for dairy products. This has enabled members to set up a business despite the stiff competition from established firms.

### **More cows or more milk?**

Bamba is affected by drought, so it is important to select the right breed of cow for this area. The indigenous breed produces as little as 1 litre of milk per day so Wazo Jema try to convince farmers to switch to a breed that produces more, therefore needing less animals. But culture make this switch difficult: more cows means more status. Convincing people to own less but more productive cows is challenging, but members are showing – by example – that it is more economical to rear fewer but more productive cows. With ten more productive animals, a young farmer is demonstrating that he can produce more milk than someone with 400 unproductive cows. During drought conditions, it is also much easier to keep ten rather than 400 cows alive.

Vijabiz organised learning tours which allowed us get exposure to and learn from other successful farmers. They took us on a tour to Kajiado's Olosian Dairy Farm, a farm specialised in dairy, right from rearing cows to processing and even including marketing. This tour, which took place on the 29th of May 2019, provided hands-on experience on how to select the best cow breeds for increased milk production. With this information and the continuous mentorship sessions, Wazo Jema motivated the youth to participate in various areas of the dairy value chain. Now two of the group's 12 members are rearing four crossbred cows, each producing 40 liters of milk per day.

### **Overcoming obstacles**

It is crucial to engage youth groups in agribusiness and the dairy value chain as it can contribute to solving the problem of unemployment in the Bamba region and beyond; but there are a number of challenges that need to be overcome. Youth in Bamba are intent on engaging in non-agricultural activities because of the harsh climatic conditions. Further, many have been put off by the idea of dairy farming because they have been exposed to traditional dairy farming approaches. These approaches include the rearing of indigenous cow breeds that produce less than five litres of milk per day which yields no economic benefits. Also, livestock ownership is often restricted to the rich and elderly.

Interactions with the county government and other organisations have been providing the group with extension services, motivating more youth to engage in agribusiness activities. Yet, a lack of proper equipment, high costs of production, the perishability of dairy products and a lack of funds are challenges. Active recruitment and information sharing by Wazo Jema group leaders allowed the group to reach more farmers and increase the amount of milk we buy to 100 litres per day. Still, increased illiteracy levels among older farmers, persistent negative perceptions by youth towards agribusiness and low ownership of land by youth have hindered the group from increasing its production so far.

Capacity building through Vijabiz, including entrepreneurship training at Kibarani, empowered the group to understand how to develop a successful dairy business while managing the dynamics in the group. USTADI's ICT training also enabled Wazo Jema to market its products online through Facebook, Twitter and WhatsApp groups. This has increased sales. For example, the group found an online marketer who has an online kiosk called Marikiti Soko Letu in Mombasa, who helped market the group's products. Wazo Jema also organised a 'table banking' system to mobilise the resources needed to start the dairy project, with the



“We are motivated to go far because the trainings have taken us from thinking of small-scale business to become competitive business people.”

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assistance of Vijabiz and the county government. The group also connected with financial institutions like Imarika SACCO. Still, members face difficulties in accessing loans due to a lack of collateral.

One of the group’s priorities is to improve its packaging. Wazo Jema used to pack its processed products in water bottles and other plastic packaging materials, which are now banned by the government. Therefore, the group is working to improve the packaging and license and brand the products. To achieve this, the group has contacted departments like the Kenya Dairy Board and the Kenya Bureau of Standards. Proper branding and licensing will also allow Wazo Jema to sell to supermarkets.

### **Conclusion**

There are many challenges that individual farmers face in the remote areas of the Bamba region. However, when youth are engaged, they introduce innovative approaches that can increase the productivity and incomes of dairy farmers. Wazo Jema Youth Group has found that engaging youth in agribusiness activities is improving the living standards of themselves and their communities. This group is providing access to a market for farmers who otherwise wouldn’t be able to sell their products. Forming groups of farmers, introduction of crossbred cows and introducing solar powered pasteurisation and cooling plants run by the youth has been effective. A number of group members have also been able to get additional income by transporting milk from the farmers and cooperatives using motorcycles, earning them between KSh 200-300 (€1.80-2.70) per day.

In addition, the success achieved by Wazo Jema serves as motivation for other groups and youth in the

region, even when there is no structured mentorship and partnership with the local government. It is recommended that young people in the region, as well as in other rural areas, form groups to undertake innovative solutions. As one of its members said, “We are motivated to go far because the trainings have taken us from thinking of small-scale business to become competitive business people. We can sell our products online through Facebook, get linkages to markets, keep our records well and mentor our fellow youths. This way, those who were left out now can be included.” Through capacity building efforts from organisations such as USTADI and county governments, young people can present solutions that the entire community will benefit from. Local governments and other organisations can surely use the example of Wazo Jema, and other successful groups, to mentor more youth in the future.



**Suleiman Jefwa**

Wazo Jema Youth Group

*E-mail: Suleimanjefwa1984@gmail.com*



**Ruth Kache**

Jiinue Youth Group

*E-mail: Ruthkache9@yahoo.com*



**Peter Langat**

Regional Youth Resource and Information Centre

*E-mail: peterlangat520@gmail.com*

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# DAIRY CONSUMERS ATTRACTED VIA SOCIAL MEDIA

*Josphat Kinuthia Gachomba*



The Greenbelt Youth Group is in the business of milk bulking and processing. With a Vijabiz learning tour to a dairy facility on producing yoghurt and fermented milk, its capacity has grown, from handling 150 to 500 litres of milk per day. The group now employs all 12 group members. Vijabiz ICT training helped Greenbelt to market its products far beyond its usual area of operation and entrepreneurship training helped the group build trust with its consumers. The project has generated employment opportunities and has increased the group's return on sales by over 60%.

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*Cover Youth groups displaying a new knowledge product on modern dairy production they obtained as part of a learning journey organised by the Vijabiz project*

In March 2017, 12 young people shared a vision: we wanted to provide a collaborative platform, pulling our resources together to raise our economic status. The youths, aged 20-35 years, formed the Greenbelt Youth Group. The group, located in Dundori division, Bahati sub-county in Nakuru county, is currently in the business of milk bulking, processing and has embraced the concept of value addition and diversification with the support of training from the Vijabiz project. We now sell chilled raw milk, pasteurised milk, yoghurt and fermented milk.

We have a strong market presence in Dundori, dispensing milk from five of our distribution points with one also serving as a collection point. Chilled raw milk is also supplied to retailers in the locality. We have plans to widen our supply and market catchment area to the greater Nakuru county and eventually nationwide. The group is currently handling 400-500 litres of milk per day and has the potential to grow this volume to 10,000 litres a day. At the moment, a lack of equipment and resources to store more product is constraining growth but we are working to overcome

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With the support of training from the Vijabiz project, we now sell chilled raw milk, pasteurised milk, yoghurt and fermented milk.

these challenges. After that, the sky is the limit: the milk supply is plentiful, and the market has the potential to absorb all that the group produces. Greenbelt's goal is to be a leading company in the processing and supply of milk and other dairy products by the year 2022.

After training in Kajiado at Olosian Dairy Farm in May 2019, the group gained vast knowledge in yoghurt making and fermented milk production, which led to the diversification of our products. Our business started in 2017, selling 150 litres of chilled raw milk per day and employed four youths: a woman who operated a milk kiosk and three men who collected the milk from farmers using motorbikes. With our improved business practices and diversification, the business now sells 450 litres of chilled milk, 50 litres of flavoured yoghurt and 75 litres of fermented milk per day. We also now employ all 12 members: five men collect milk and seven women process, package, brand, market and sell the products. Due to increased growth and production, we have also expanded by establishing two additional selling points. As a result of increased profits, the 12 members are paid KSh 500 (€4.50), while the rest is saved in our KCB bank account.

### ***ICT as a marketing tool***

Most youths are tech-savvy so online marketing has worked very well for us. During an ICT training organised in Nakuru, our group gained exposure to and knowledge on online marketing platforms such as Facebook and WhatsApp. We were taught to create our own Facebook page and WhatsApp group through which we can promote our products, helping to market our products far beyond our area of operation. As one consumer states, "I saw you supply milk, which is when I thought of investing in a milk business with you as my supplier."

We take quality photos of our branded products and write proper descriptions about each one. These photos are posted, in addition to location, prices, special offers, and after-sales services. We have also become more creative in our branding, pricing and marketing strategies. Facebook and WhatsApp also allow us to receive direct feedback from our customers, for example on quality or prices, which is analysed and used to improve our offers. The online marketing strategy has however much limits as it also depends on the consistency of internet services and the availability of devices to access the online platforms in our communities.

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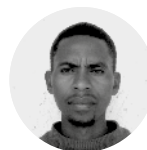
We have been able to brand, package and market our products both online and offline; employment opportunities have been generated and return on sales has increased by over 60%.

### **Who wants to buy?**

The training on entrepreneurship was an eye-opener for the group, as it showed us how to identify our specific market segment, and how to carry out market research on current trends. This has resulted in renewed energy and a change of attitude among the members to work together. Consumers' trust was the hardest nut to crack, requiring high quality products, excellent customer relations, profiled marketing, good branding, a packaging strategy, and proper business management. Yet all of this was easily achieved as members were equipped with the necessary skills from the trainings organised by USTADI, CTA and IFAD. And when we needed additional skills, these were hired in. For example, when we started diversifying, we hired a professional to handle the branding and packaging of our yoghurt to the required standards, as the Kenya Bureau of Standards dictates.

### **Conclusion and recommendations**

When Greenbelt Youth Group started processing milk products, people criticised our products. They believed the quality was compromised, competition was tough, there was inconsistency in production and poor packaging methods were used. Through Vijabiz, the group benefitted from capacity building workshops, trade shows, mentorship, learning journeys and training, enabling us to overcome some of these challenges. We have been able to brand, package and market our products both online and offline; employment opportunities have been generated and return on sales has increased by over 60%. We would welcome the opportunity to become trainers in this field ourselves, so that we share our experiences and encourage other youths to engage in agribusiness.



**Josphat Kinuthia Gachomba**  
Chairperson Greenbelt Youth Group  
*E-mail: [jkinuthia86@gmail.com](mailto:jkinuthia86@gmail.com)*

# USING NEW KNOWLEDGE TO SOLVE OLD PROBLEMS

*Geoffrey Wachira*



Creative Investors Co-operative Society has demonstrated how capacity building, mentorship sessions and learning journeys can lead to tangible results in terms of better and sustainable income. The group engages in dairy farming, processing and marketing. Through Vijabiz, the group has found novel, relatively cheaper ways of increasing productivity and income from their dairy cows. Since March 2019, the group's income has increased from US\$250 (€230) to over US\$400 (€370) per month. Creative Investors has achieved a consistent income, largely driven by consistent production, a reliable market and an effective pricing strategy.

*Cover Creative Investors  
Co-operative Society*

Over the last decade, capacity building has become the silver bullet for enduring challenges in rural development. Unlike the tried and tested practice of throwing money at problems, enhancing the capacity of project beneficiaries has proven to be an excellent way of tackling existential challenges across diverse sectors – including the agricultural sector. One such initiative is the Vijabiz project. Among the project beneficiaries is Creative Investors Co-operative Society, a youth group based in Molo. Molo is a highly productive agricultural region, located approximately 50 km from Nakuru. The group engages in dairy farming, processing of dairy products and marketing. Through Vijabiz, the group has found novel, relatively cheap ways of increasing productivity and income from their dairy cows. Through close mentorship and organised learning journeys to established dairy farms, the group has achieved considerable success, which would otherwise have gone unrealised.

### ***Mentoring and learning***

Farmers' limited capacity to produce more effectively impacts negatively on their enterprises, the economy and food security. Few and poorly facilitated government extension services only exacerbate the situation, as extension officers struggle to reach out to farmers. This leaves farmers to either implement new technologies blindly or rely on archaic ways of farming.

Both strategies lead to similar results: low production, low income and an unending cycle of poverty.

Through projects such as Vijabiz, much-needed capacity reaches enthusiastic but neglected rural youth. As part of the project, youth groups were assigned to mentors in March 2019 and taken on learning journeys to selected well-established model dairy farms in Kajiado and Kakamega counties. Part of the mentor's responsibility is to instil entrepreneurial spirit and help the groups clear day-to-day hurdles. Creative Investors, a group of four women and six men, attended three 11-day workshops and two 8-day learning journeys. Members learnt about crucial dairy activities such as hygienic milk production, marketing, and feed preparation techniques such as fermentation and ensiling. Incorporating these activities in the group has increased milk production, which has in turn translated to higher, sustainable income and livelihoods. Subsequently, six other farmers visited and learnt from the Creative Investors group, creating a snowball effect in the surrounding community. More farmers are expected to visit as the initial scepticism dissipates.

The mentorship and learning journeys were a real eye-opener. We were able to learn about the practicalities of dairy farming from the practitioners themselves: the challenges, the opportunities and the know-how to navigate the dairy sector. We could trust

the experience of these practitioners and the mentors adapted to our group's situation. They offered free tutorials and there was an 'open door' policy, where we could approach them with our questions.

### ***Improved levels of income***

Before the Vijabiz capacity building efforts, group members faced a situation of depressed, erratic revenue. Since March 2019, the group's income has increased from US\$250 (€230) to over US\$400 (€370) per month. Higher incomes have improved the members' and group's credit worthiness, enhanced financial inclusion and created better standards of living. All ten members now have active bank and mobile money accounts enabled by consistent business cash flow and a reinvigorated culture of saving. The group's dairy cows are well fed and healthy, enhancing the group's asset base. This is a clear departure from the poorly fed, low producing cows that could not serve as loan collateral. Additionally, the members are able to access better medical care services, education for their children and other basic needs. For example, Benedict Wasike was a casual farm worker but because of his diligence became a group member. Now, being a fulltime employee of the group, he has a stable income and can now plan his income.

Despite the success the group has had, more could have been achieved; the high cost of credit and pressures of inflation are still a hindrance. Some members are also reluctant to contract bank loans. The low levels of interest on savings offered by



commercial banks does not help the group's cynicism towards the commitment of financial institutions to youth empowerment. In this regard, banks should be encouraged to come up with youth-friendly saving and credit products for this underserved segment.

*Above Youth participants learning about silage making during a learning tour*

### ***Sustainable income***

Higher income will count for little if it manifests for a short period of time. The project will truly be a success when beneficiaries are able to sustain the same or even higher levels of performance during and long after the

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The main challenge remains ensuring buy-in and consistent application which can be achieved through gradual rather than radical adoption. Change is never easy but it is always worth it.



end of the intervention. The Creative Investors group has demonstrated a consistent income, largely driven by consistent production, a reliable market and an effective pricing strategy. This is a far cry from the past where the group made profits only during a few months per year. The market has become a reliable destination for the group's products since customers are assured of a consistent supply. A good pricing strategy makes the most of the financial strengths of different customer segments.

The exposure provided by the Vijabiz project has inspired the group to create additional revenue streams. For example, the group was only selling milk, but now also sells dairy feeds to other dairy farmers. We also intend to start a learning centre where dairy farmers can learn about better dairy management for a small fee.

### **Addressing challenges**

One area the group struggled with was its cattle breeding activities. The high rate of artificial insemination failures, coupled with limited financial resources, have hindered the group. For instance, out of three cows inseminated between January and March 2019, all the three failed to conceive. This affected the group's balance sheet, as we had to feed dry cows for longer periods than anticipated and made it more difficult to plan ahead. Our inability to correctly read cow signals was the main cause of this failure, because the animals were inseminated at the wrong time. However, with the training we learnt how to correctly identify a cow on heat.

Learning new skills is not always easy, especially when innovations challenge long-held beliefs – however unfounded they may be. This is exactly the situation that the Creative Investors Co-operative Society found themselves in. The two group members who participated in the Vijabiz trainings had the responsibility of documenting the experience for future reference and disseminating the newly acquired knowledge to the rest of the members.

They faced an initial challenge of ensuring participation from the more sceptical members. For instance, some members had long believed that dairy cows should be fed on wet fodder, while the Vijabiz-trained members learnt that dry matter was the best form of fodder. However, through practical experimenting, all members saw the benefits. We tested the new ideas on a few cows to see whether the practices really worked. For instance, by fermenting feeds, milk production increased, and by feeding cows with dry matter, milk production was notably higher.

The group also trained six neighbouring farmers and non-members who have adopted the new methods of production and dairy management. These six farmers came to the farm on their own initiative to capture what Creative Investors had learnt from the journeys, tradeshows and mentorship. The neighbouring farmers were really happy, and, from their feedback, we identified the potential for training other farmers for a fee.

### **Conclusion and recommendations**

Direct financial assistance is not always a silver bullet. Building the capacity of youth to effectively tackle their day-to-day challenges has proved to be equally, if not more effective. The Vijabiz project has capacity building at its core. Creative Investors Co-operative Society has already demonstrated how capacity building, mentorship sessions and learning journeys can produce tangible results in terms of better and sustainable income. The leap in production and income is testament enough that capacity building works, if done well. The main challenge remains ensuring buy-in and consistent application which can be achieved through gradual rather than radical adoption. Change is never easy, but it is always worth it.

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#### **Geoffrey Wachira**

Chairperson Creative Investors  
Co-operative Society

*E-mail: kamauffrey@gmail.com*

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# BUILDING A BRAND THROUGH YOUNG AGRI-PRENEURSHIP

*Elizabeth Wachera and Chepkirui Ronoh*



The Umoja youth group was selling unpasteurised milk until this was declared forbidden. With the support of Pwani University and Vijabiz, they turned to processing milk to yoghurt and fermented milk. Through several trainings, they learnt to identify existing market gaps and develop a business plan that helps to set up new ventures. With a new Facebook page the group updates customers on new products and developments, and gets feedback from clients. They have also created a brand name and developed beautiful packaging.

*Cover A representative of Umoja youth group*

The Umoja youth group is based in Kilifi county, along the Kenyan coast. Umoja, in Swahili, means ‘unity’, so we chose to emphasise the importance of working together. The group has 15 members aged between 18 and 35 years, seven of whom are women. Umoja started in 2012 under the Equity Bank Youth Initiative programme, where youths would access loans for their small start-up businesses. Some decided to start a group enterprise; after some research we agreed to start hawking fresh milk.

Selling milk required little expertise. Our main competitor was contracted to sell their milk to a company outside Kilifi town, leaving a gap within Kilifi town. Three motorbikes and one bicycle were used to collect milk from farmers and cooperatives and deliver to our clients. We sold up to 200 litres of unpasteurised milk per day, and this continued until September 2018 when the Kenya Dairy Board – a body that regulates the handling, processing and sale of milk – prohibited the sale of unpasteurised milk. This was a major blow to our booming business, and we had to come up with a new idea; processing milk into yoghurt and fermented milk, commonly known as *mala*.

Since we lacked expertise on yoghurt making, five members were enrolled on a 5-day training course on milk handling and value addition at Pwani University.

We began making yoghurt and *mala* but, unlike fresh milk which was a basic product in every household, yoghurt and *mala* were considered a luxury by most of our clients. This resulted in an unstable market for our products, prompting three of our members to pull out.

### **Building skills and new insights**

In June 2018 the Vijabiz project invited us on a series of trainings, including a 1-day workshop on capacity building that three Umoja members attended. This enabled us to identify existing market gaps in the dairy value chain, such as a demand for ice cream and cheese, which no one was venturing into within Kilifi town or in the nearby towns and villages. Our group is now working to make ice cream in the short-term, in addition to all of the recent improvements made to their business.

Five of our members attended a 1-week training course on entrepreneurship and as a result we were able to develop a business plan – something we did not have before the training. Having a business plan helped us set up new ventures such as producing ice cream and allowed us to identify the opportunities and risks of our planned and existing activities. The business plan also enabled us to set out our objectives, predict market trends, and come up with financial projections to ascertain viable and sustainable projects.

## ***Our reach expands***

Three group members attended a training on ICT and social media marketing, where we were taught how to keep records as well as put the business on a global platform by creating social media pages. Currently we have a Facebook page called Umoja youth group-Kilifi, where we update our new products and developments and feedback from our clients. Facebook offers a variety of free features to engage with customers; we post updates, pictures and videos to communicate with them. We are also using it to send messages to clients directly, create events, manage appointments, hire employees and sell products. Furthermore, we can access statistics about the page, helping us understand more about our clients and what they care about. This has opened up new markets for us.

Vijabiz also organised learning journeys. Two members visited a dairy farm in Kajiado, Narok county, where both production and processing are done. Listening to their success story and hearing the challenges they overcame sparked Umoja's motivation. The group also participated in two trade shows in Kilifi and Malindi sub-counties which gave Umoja the opportunity to also start selling products in Malindi. Umoja realised that companies with branded products attract more visitors, and thus had better networks and greater outreach which challenged them to improve packaging and branding.



Umoja used to deliver products in water bottles, but after the training realised that their sales would improve if they had a brand and proper packaging. The group now uses 'NaNas' as their brand name and have developed beautiful packaging for their products. Packaging in small and affordable quantities has also enabled them to sell more. Branding not only makes a memorable impression on consumers but also allows customers and clients to know what to expect from Umoja. Now, some clients at the retail stores insist on buying NaNas products as opposed to other brands.

*Above Youth at a milk processing plant*

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Umoja used to deliver products in water bottles, but after the training realised that their sales would improve if they had a brand and proper packaging. The group now uses 'NaNas' as their brand name and have developed beautiful packaging for their products.

As a result, retailers who did not stock our products before started doing so. Unfortunately, our plastic packaging introduces more plastic into the environment, which is something we would like to do differently in the future.

### **Growing**

The group began selling yoghurt in September 2018, mostly on weekends whenever there was an event such as a wedding or party. This did not provide Umoja with a sustainable source of income and so demotivated group members. With the support of USTADI and other key players such as the county government of Kilifi, the Kenya Bureau of Standards and the Kenya Dairy Board, Umoja has been able to increase their sales from 20 litres over the weekends to 70 litres per day, and the members that had left the group have now returned.

Umoja's growth can be attributed to their improved marketing strategy, both online and offline. Using the Facebook page, friends became curious to try it out. Quickly the client base went from just friends to include strangers, retail units and supermarkets. Umoja has also educated their clients about the health benefits of yoghurt: it is good for the bones, helps in weight loss, controls blood pressure and builds immunity, for example. Although yoghurt does not work for everyone, clients have been ready to try it. Free samples were issued to friends and retailers so that they could give their feedback and most then placed orders. We also gave credit sales to retailers and supermarkets who were not ready to risk selling a new product. Most of them are now buying on cash after believing in our products.

Unfortunately, the group has had some challenges in acquiring raw materials. Most of its milk suppliers use cows that feed on pastures, so when there is a drought there is less milk to buy. Also, poor infrastructure can be a problem. Milk is a perishable product, so if it does not reach Umoja in time, the quality deteriorates. Yet, Umoja's members feel that it is important to keep working with the farmers as their main suppliers. These are farmers who had very little access to the market before, so Umoja is proud that it is supporting the farmers and their communities by processing and selling their products.

### **Conclusions**

Statistics show that a large share of Kenya's population is under 30 and only a small part of these young people are employed. With agriculture contributing about 26% percent of Kenya's GDP, Umoja encourages fellow youths to engage in agribusiness to create employment for themselves and others. The group has now created employment for all of its members involved in yoghurt and *mala* making and is planning on expanding to create employment opportunities for non-members. Umoja also urges youth to be on the look-out for support from county governments, the national government as well as non-governmental organisations so that they can benefit from projects such as Vijabiz.




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**Elizabeth Wachera**

Umoja Youth Group, Kilifi

*E-mail: elizabeth.wachera2@gmail.com*

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**Chepkirui Ronoh**

Ogilgei Youth Group, Nakuru

*E-mail: ronohjacquee789@gmail.com*



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# ***CEREALS VALUE CHAIN***

# GENERATING INCOME WITH NUTRITIOUS MAIZE FLOUR

*Hillary Omondi and Fredrik Kimani*





In two distinct regions in Kenya, high youth unemployment, as well as the ever-present threat of food insecurity, encouraged two youth groups to take action. Tiger and SPEAK youth groups are located in Nakuru East and Kilifi South respectively, and both are working to produce, process and sell cereals. With the support of the Vijabiz project, enriching cereal products has provided more sustainable employment for the youth.

*Cover A young woman from Tiger Group showcases a packaged cereal product they sell*

### **Two groups**

**S**PEAK Youth Group was established in 2017 and is made up of 15 members. The group began working with cereals from the start, buying maize, sorghum and wheat from farmers and then selling it to the company East African Breweries Limited for a profit. We started processing cereals into flour and enriched them with highly nutritious vitamins. We produce Afya Ugali; an all-natural and organic high-fibre maize flour, enriched with rice bran, cinnamon, turmeric, amaranth and pumpkin seed powder.

Tiger Group has existed since 2013 and consists of ten members. When Tiger was formed it was involved in other income generating activities, including owning and running an entertainment business, a restaurant and a sweet shop. We used to think that agriculture was not meant for youth but wanted to build a business together to empower our members economically. So we bought pool tables and started showing football matches in our venue, which was a good venture. When we saw that our clientele went outside to eat, we also started the restaurant.

Despite the different histories of each group, both followed a similar trajectory after collaboration with Vijabiz.

### **Expanding into cereals**

The activities of both groups began simply, however the high rate of youth unemployment and the prevalence of food insecurity inspired us to do more. We wanted to empower young people and farmers in our area, as well as promote the consumption of healthy and nutritious flour. To realise these objectives, members of our groups started contributing money to start a group business. Due to our close relationship with the Ministry of Agriculture of Nakuru, in 2018 we heard about the Vijabiz project.

After applying, three members from each group were contacted and invited to attend workshops in Nakuru and Kilifi. These events brought together many experts for three value chains – fisheries, cereals and dairy – including representatives from government agencies and financial institutions. One of the advantages of attending one of the workshops was that it gave us a chance to interact with the experts. When people from the Ministry of Agriculture shared the major gaps that existed in the three commodity chains, we saw an opportunity for us in the cereal value chain.

Tiger became interested in the milling of maize into maize flour, adding value to the raw product and selling it to customers for a higher price. Cereals seemed like a good choice because we saw that they

were in high demand, including in our own restaurant. We used our savings from our existing business to buy a second-hand milling machine to process maize into flour. Tiger now uses the milling machine to produce flour, which we use in our own hotel, but also to mill maize for customers for a fee. We also enrich our flour with cinnamon, amaranth, pumpkin seeds and rice bran. This 'Afri maize meal' was beautifully labelled by Joseph Muriuki, a member who attended an ICT training course organised by Vijabiz. We later added another product: 'Afri uji', a porridge mixture of sorghum, millet and cassava. We recently launched 'Afri peanuts', deliciously fried and beautifully packed peanuts.

Despite the challenges of price fluctuations and inadequate resources and lack of advanced machinery we have seen positive changes. We increased our revenues from KSh 150,000 (€1,370) per month before milling, to KSh 180,000-200,000 (€1,650-1,830) after milling began. SPEAK on the other hand entered into a partnership with an already established milling company (Equitorial Millers), due to lack of machinery and production rights.

### **Improving the business**

Vijabiz training on entrepreneurship skills, held in February 2019 in both Nakuru and Kilifi, gave us an opportunity to learn how to digitise financial records using Excel sheets, which we adopted having never saved records before. Keeping records digitally has increased the efficiency of the management of our finances and our financial history is now accessible to all group members that are computer literate. In the

same training course, we learnt about group dynamics, which has been of great help to accommodate one another – including those who do not yet have the skills to work with a computer.

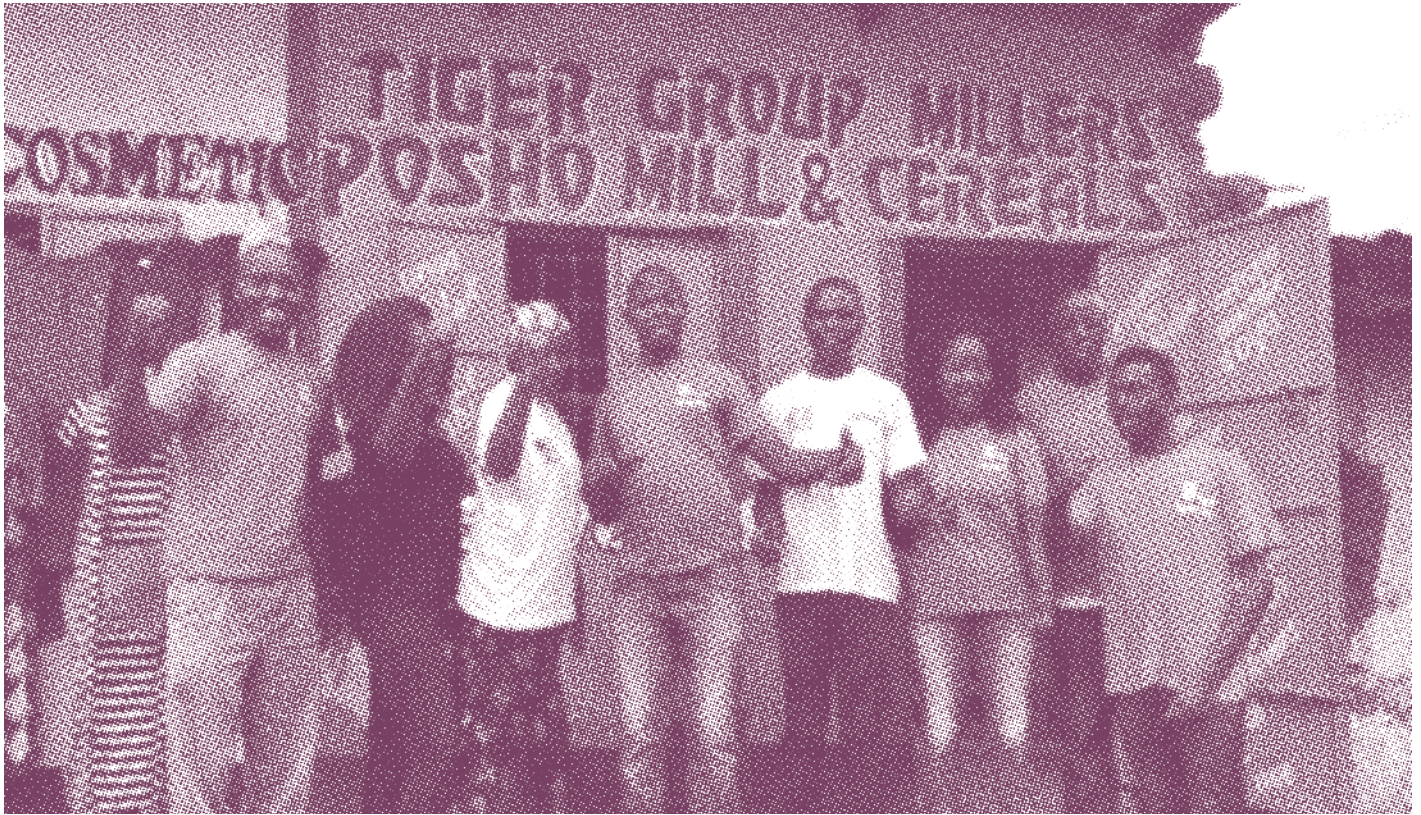
After the 5-day Vijabiz ICT and marketing training course, held in March 2019, we adopted the use of social media by creating our own Facebook pages: Tiger Group and SPEAK Youth Group. Our Facebook pages have enabled us to reach out to many customers. We have received inquiries for our products from surprising sources; a local school (Blessed Winners' Academy) contracted Tiger to supply maize flour after it saw our product on our Facebook page. SPEAK's product, that goes by the name Afya Ugali, is currently doing well in big supermarkets like Tuskys in Kilifi. However, not all our customers have come to us via our Facebook pages.

We were also given the opportunity to attend trade shows organised by the USTADI Foundation in Kilifi and Nakuru. The trade show experience was one of a kind. We had the opportunity to exhibit our products, Afya Ugali & Afri Tiger maize meal, thereby reaching out to new customers. The trade show gave us a chance to increase our brand awareness and visibility in the market and educate customers about our product. The feedback we got was very encouraging: many customers were pleased with our product.

With the support of Vijabiz, we also had the opportunity to undergo mentorship programmes which has increased our knowledge of business. Before the start of the mentorship programme, we lacked the technical capacity to develop a comprehensive business plan, but the intense

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The trade show experience was one of a kind. We had the opportunity to exhibit our products, Afya Ugali & Afri Tiger maize meal, thereby reaching out to new customers.



*Above Some members of the Tiger Group in front of their shop*

mentorship facilitated by the CoELIB and Demand Link Business Solutions teams in Nakuru and Kilifi helped us create one. This plan will help us a great deal to seek financial support for our growth and expansion. The approach used in the mentorship programme was perfect for the stage our groups were in: it started from our needs and was not rigid with predetermined steps or sequences of activities. It really adapted to our situation.

As a result of all of the support from Vijabiz, Tiger saw a 30% increase in profit, and SPEAK an increase of 40%. Despite this success, it was difficult for all our members to incorporate all the lessons from the training courses in one week. More training, and more time to integrate the lessons would be useful in the future. Still, all of the improvements have enabled Tiger to employ eight youths: three in the milling shop, one in the sweet shop (a parallel business to the cereal activities), another one in the entertainment business and three working in our collectively-owned hotel. SPEAK youth group does not employ people yet, because we do not mill ourselves, but we are currently focusing more on marketing Afya Ugali to boost sales to increase revenue.

## **Conclusion**

The SPEAK and Tiger experiences show that the Vijabiz activities have been truly valuable in very different contexts. A group which was already involved in selling cereals was able to improve its sales and way of working, while a group which was engaged in radically different activities was enabled to add the cereals value chain to their repertoire. For both groups, there is still room for expansion. We wish to have access to more advanced machinery, capable of producing greater quantities of our products. In the next three years we aim to be large producers of highly nutritious maize flour, which is different from the conventional maize flour that currently exists in the market. We can only realise this by acquiring better machinery and taking control of the entire production process.



**Hillary O. Omondi**

Speak Youth Group, Kilifi

*E-mail: hillaryokello95@gmail.com*



**Fredrik Kimani**

Tiger Self Help Group, Nakuru

*E-mail: montecinos@gmail.com*

# YOUTH LINK FARMERS TO MARKETS IN THE CEREAL VALUE CHAIN

*Christopher Mwavuna and Boniface Gitau*



Two youth groups, both involved in processing and selling cereal products, were struggling to source and process raw materials. After acquiring new skills by attending entrepreneurial training and trade shows organised by Vijabiz, the groups have begun to focus on value addition of cereals to make flour and livestock feeds that are in constant demand in the market. As a result, the groups have been able to produce a range of products such as Uji Star, Ugali Star, maize germ, wheat bran and dairy meal. Through contract farming and improved marketing, they are creating a trusting and rewarding relationship with both farmers and customers.

*Cover Henrok 6 at a trade show exhibiting their products*

### **Youth groups meet Vijabiz**

Agrisolve Youth Group is based in Kibarani ward in Kilifi county. It was formed in 2017 with the aim of making animal feeds such as maize germ, wheat bran and dairy meal. It has 12 members, with seven women and five men. Henrok 6 Youth Group Trading, also known as ‘Henrok 6 Limited’, is based in Menengai ward in Nakuru county, and started in 2016. Henrok 6 processes maize, millet, sorghum and cassava to make ‘Ugali Star’ (shifted maize flour), ‘Uji Star’ (porridge flour) and animal feeds from the by-products. Henrok 6 has 14 members: four women and ten men.

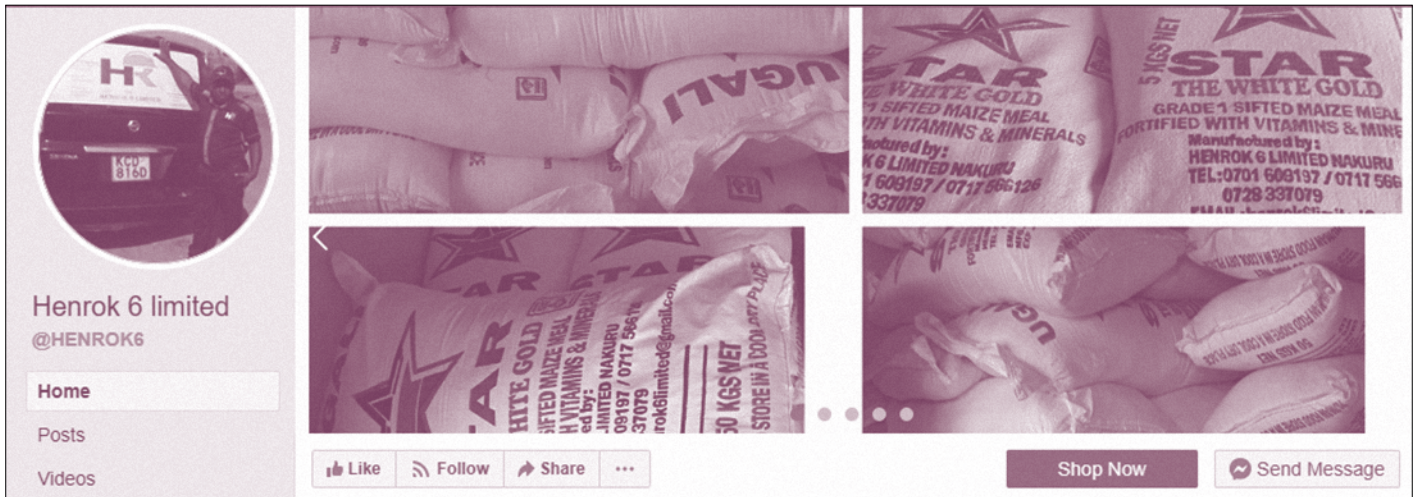
In March 2018, the two groups (found more than 200 km from each other) were invited to work with Vijabiz. Before this, both groups grappled with challenges of penetrating the market, improper record keeping and a lack of ICT skills. Through ICT and entrepreneurship training, mentorship sessions and trade shows, the Vijabiz project enabled group members to brand and package their products in units that are convenient and affordable, even to low income households. For example, we started selling porridge flour packaged in 500 g units for KSh 30 (€0.27), and 1 kg of maize germ for KSh 40 (€0.36). To many customers, the larger portions that are usually sold are not as appealing as the smaller packages. Still, the high cost of equipment such as a mixer and grinding machine is hindering us from producing a greater variety of products.

### **Improved practices**

We both used to source raw materials – maize, millet and sorghum – from middlemen, and did not have a clear way of keeping records. After joining the Vijabiz project we started getting our raw materials directly from farmers through contract farming. This eliminated the need for middlemen and cut costs of production. The youth groups now provide the seeds, fertilisers and pesticides, and guarantee the farmers stable prices for their produce, while the farmers commit to supplying the cereals. Henrok 6, for example, is working with 36 maize farmers in Nakuru county.

It can be challenging for both sides to keep to the contract, when for instance imported maize lowers the market prices for maize or when weather and pests lead to low production. Yet we realised that many farmers appreciate that we meet them face-to-face, and by giving them a market we provide for their needs. When we go to the farmers it becomes easier for them to sell to us because we come from the same area. We speak the local dialect, making it easier to offer extension services. In turn, this translates to higher volumes of sales for our enterprises.

The groups are now able to carry out their activities in a systematic manner, right from milling, branding and packaging, to advertisement and selling. We also developed a proper record keeping strategy and carry



out a product review twice a year. With the product review we go to our clients' farms and ask questions on the performance of our animal feed: do they see their cattle or poultry grow faster, for example, or do they see a difference in the quality of milk and eggs? Clients give us feedback on what to improve and what we do well. We use these comments, constantly striving to offer the best possible products and services.

### **Market linkages in the cereal value chain**

Improving the way in which we link farmers to markets has increased sales by 10% for Agrisolve Youth Group and 14% for Henrok 6 Youth Group Trading. This increase is a direct result not only of the contract farming, but also of the marketing skills we learnt from USTADI Foundation trainings through the Vijabiz project. We learnt how to create a Facebook page, we created a brand name and learnt

how to pitch our products. The ICT skills learnt in a training course with ICT for Development Kenya have enabled us to incorporate the use of social media in our business. The 'Agrisolve Youth Group' Facebook page and the 'Henrok 6 Limited' Facebook page have strengthened our competitive advantage, since our products are of a good quality and we can demonstrate this. However, the high cost of internet access and ICT gadgets is a challenge.

We got better at explaining our business to the public, winning customers and improving our network during trade shows and with peer-to-peer visits. For example, Henrok 6 was able to win a contract from the national Ministry of Interior and Coordination to supply food provisions. Agricultural trade shows organised by local governments have also opened up new networking platforms for us. We have acquired negotiation skills that help us to convince potential customers as we network in the trade shows to enter into an agreement with us. In this way, the training

*Above Henrok 6's Facebook page, showcasing their 'Ugali Star' product*

Before the implementation of this project it was difficult for us to access markets, our record keeping was poor, and we did not know how to use ICT in our enterprises.

courses have enabled us to acquire more contract farmers and buyers through referrals from the county governments.

Despite the increase in contracted farmers, a limited supply of cereals, due to unfavourable weather conditions which are only made worse by climate variability, is hindering us from meeting demand in the market. The groups have also worked hard to decrease post-harvest losses by ensuring fast delivery of raw materials and establishing an ‘order to buy’ system – where we produce goods to order. Yet poor infrastructure, such as road networks to transport agricultural produce, has also been a challenge.

### **Gaining financial freedom**

We see ourselves and other youths on the road to financial freedom because we are involved in agribusiness in the cereal value chain. Vijabiz, in collaboration with county governments, exposed us to these agribusiness opportunities. We recognise that there are still other youth that see a white-collar job as superior to agribusiness. This narrative, we think, is the most limiting factor for them to gain financial freedom. We offer them an example of how agribusiness can be an excellent way to make a profit and make a difference in our communities.

We have witnessed an increase in the number of bank accounts opened by our group members and other youths, because of the financial management skills learnt in our mentorship sessions with Demand Link Business Solutions. This organisation was contacted by the USTADI Foundation and CTA to train and mentor youth groups on entrepreneurial skills, and also to monitor our progress. The main hindrance in increasing the financial resources of our members is that banks and other financial institutions, like SACCO (Savings and Credit Cooperative Society), have high interest rates and withdrawal charges, which make youth shun them.

The restricted number of youths that the Vijabiz project was able to train in our group limited how many youths could benefit. Even though the trained members trained their peers independently, this transfer of knowledge was limited by a lack of computers to demonstrate the ICT and business management skills in practice.

Still, at Henrok 6, we have been able to employ ten other youths, who are not group members, to help us

run our businesses since we have expanded our operations. For Agrisolve Youth Group, all workers are currently group members. However, a lack of capacity to scale up and bureaucracy of financial institutions to access credit has hindered us from employing more youths. More capital to invest in feed machines and buy raw materials in bulk would allow us to scale up.

### **Conclusion and recommendations**

Before the implementation of this project it was difficult for us to access markets, our record keeping was poor, and we did not know how to use ICT in our enterprises. Agrisolve Youth Group and Henrok 6 Youth Group Trading were able to create new market linkages thanks to the support of the USTADI Foundation and CTA through the Vijabiz project. Training, trade shows and opportunities for networking with county government stakeholders have supported us in our growth.

We would welcome the opportunity to better our skills and grow even further, seeing opportunities for this by attending more training, and by visiting and learning from other companies and organisations that are doing similar activities. We appreciate that this is a great milestone we have taken with the Vijabiz project and we recommend that more youth be given such an opportunity.




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**Christopher Mwavuna**

Agrisolve Youth Group, Kilifi

*E-mail: Chrismwavuna93@gmail.com*




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**Boniface Gitau**

Henrok 6 Youth Group Trading,  
Nakuru

*E-mail: bontao89@gmail.com*





**4**

***FISHERIES  
VALUE CHAIN***

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# TRANSFORMING YOUNG LIVES WITH AQUAPONICS

*James Maina*



Ten young members of the Greenthumb Community Based Organisation in Nakuru county have set up a viable fish production and value addition enterprise. Supported by the Vijabiz project, the group set up a fish pond and seven operational aquaponics stations, and process and sell the fish. Though smaller in size, the stations are almost four times as productive as traditional fish ponds. Improved management and planning skills make it likely that the business will sustain itself in the future. The entrepreneurship and ICT training and learning tours have started to transform the youth group into a fish production and value addition enterprise.

*Cover Some members of the Greenthumb CBO show off their newly constructed fish pond and aquaponic stations*

Umoja 2 is a peri-urban village, 20 km from Nakuru town, and 90 km from Lake Naivasha. This is the region's only fishable lake and is the most overfished lake in the country. Like other regions in Kenya, Umoja 2 has a high youth population, many of whom are unemployed despite the proximity to large tracts of idle arable land. Through the Vijabiz project, the members of Greenthumb CBO, based in Umoja 2, have set up a viable fish production and value addition enterprise.

This experience showed that forming community based organisations (CBOs), such as youth groups, provides a platform for youths to engage with both governmental and non-governmental organisations. Greenthumb's aquaponic project sees the group rear more than 1,000 tilapia fish and grow indigenous vegetables in a small area of 120 m<sup>2</sup>, of which 70 m<sup>2</sup> is the pond. This equals the production from 500 m<sup>2</sup> of traditional fish and vegetable farming.

### **The transformation**

Members of Greenthumb CBO had considered becoming fish producers but changed our minds when our first fish farming project failed, and half of the members lost their investments. The group then joined Vijabiz. A series of capacity building workshops followed, including a 5-day entrepreneurship

workshop in April 2019 where the group learnt about marketing, management of group dynamics and business development and how to apply them to the fisheries value chain.

In a subsequent Vijabiz trade fair at Kagoto, Nakuru county in June 2019 and the Nakuru Agricultural Society of Kenya show in July the same year, the group met with various stakeholders such as government officials and private companies. By increasing collaboration with government officials, we managed to receive direct support, for example from the Nakuru county Ministry of Agriculture, Livestock and Fisheries, which later supported the group with training, guidance, and provision of basic materials worth more than US\$2,000 (€1,850). These increased interactions also helped solidify the idea that government officers are interested in working with and supporting the youth.

In one month, the group set up a fish pond and seven aquaponic stations, as we started undertaking further research on fisheries value addition processes. Greenthumb then began to sell fish and add value to it. We managed to produce 1,000 fish in five months, and processed these into fish fillets, fish meat balls and fish sausages. It has led to an anticipated group income of US\$5,000 (€4,600) for the first year. This is incomparable to the previous year, where the group lost all of their fish worth US\$300 (€280). The Nakuru

county Minister of Youth Affairs, Sports, Culture and Social Services hailed the efforts of the group, saying “There is need for more youth to venture in agribusiness and the innovation shown by Greenthumb is leading the way. Greenthumb will motivate more youth to join agribusiness programmes to create employment and generate incomes.”

### ***Fish production and aquaponics***

The aquaponics approach uses little space to grow both fish and vegetables. In the setup, water from the fish pond is pumped to a space where indigenous vegetables are planted. Nutrient uptake by the plants cleans the water by using the nitrate. The water is then used by the fish again. The fish pond bears 1,000 tilapia fingerlings in 70 m<sup>2</sup>, which is 14 fish per m<sup>2</sup>. Because the water is repeatedly cleaned, it is more productive than traditional ponds which can support three to four fish per m<sup>2</sup>. Greenthumb also sells the vegetables it produces – spinach, kale, black nightshade and amaranth – to the local market and a local hotel. The group is the first to use aquaponics in Nakuru county, so the Fisheries Officer is using Greenthumb as a pilot for the region to inspire a county-wide drive for fish production.

At the start of the project, group members disagreed about how to finance the project, since many were unemployed, and the future success of the project seemed uncertain. The group could have easily broken up, but leadership skills gained from the Vijabiz entrepreneurship training, and mentorship provided by Demand Link Business Solutions made the situation manageable. Careful planning with the assistance of the Ministry of Agriculture, Livestock and Fisheries officer – who met the group members at the Nakuru ASK show – made it easier to anticipate challenges such as water and fish feed requirements. The officer also provided materials such as a dam liner, tilapia fingerlings and outlets for cheaper and better feeds for the fish, as well as pumice for the aquaponic stations. Such investments were welcomed, but with our current success Greenthumb will not need to be supported by outside investors in the future: the business will sustain itself.

Despite its success, Greenthumb feels that it could have done more had it not been for our location’s lease agreement, limiting us to the existing 8 by 15 m greenhouse for both the fish pond and aquaponics stations. The absence of a solar pump, finances to install a larger greenhouse and the fact that the intensive fish stocking is a new innovation in the region have also restricted the group from higher levels of fish production.

### ***Learning and growing together***

Five of the youth group members received extensive training in fish farming activities at Sagana, about 200 km to the east of Nakuru, during a learning tour organised and facilitated by Vijabiz. They visited a fish farm, that also adds value to the fish, and received hands-on training on fish pond construction and management, fish feeds formulation, feeding patterns and the production of fish sausages, fish fillets and fish meat balls. After this, they trained the other group members. After interactions with the Kenya Marine and Fisheries Research Institute (KeMFRI) at the Kagoto Polytechnique Trade Fair, also organised and facilitated by Vijabiz, Greenthumb is set to receive more training at the KeMFRI facility in Naivasha.

Working as a group helped Greenthumb grow. We communicate through digital means, making collaboration easier. Through the ICT training, members learnt to keep each other updated on daily group activities, through the group’s Facebook account and WhatsApp group. We share information when members have attended a training course to share learning, and set up duty schedules for fish and pond management. Synergy within the group, created after Vijabiz training, allowed the members who are employed with steady incomes to financially facilitate group activities. In turn, the other group members provided labour for the project. In the past, members would provide similar financial contributions and participate equally in group activities, which introduced friction between those who were employed and the rest of the members. This latter approach was a major benefit from the entrepreneurship trainings. When members work together, there are opportunities to participate in programmes that are not available to individuals – like the training by Vijabiz. Some members have also started setting up individual fish ponds to motivate more youth to become engaged in fish production.

Greenthumb has seen increased interest in its activities, leading to the recruitment of three new female members in two months, while only one member left the group for formal employment (management of a large number of people has restricted recruitment of more youth at this stage). Recruitment of new members was made easier because people could witness the group’s success, and because of the opportunities for free training offered by Vijabiz. The project leader also attracted people to the group by being vocal about the group’s experiences and vision. One of the new Greenthumb recruits, Vannesa Wanjiru, a student at a local university said, “I did not know that there were so many free and affordable resources in the local government, and without the Vijabiz programme, I probably would still not know.”

As Greenthumb continues to develop its fish processing activities, we will provide a market for fish farmers in the region who struggle to sell their fish.

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### **Value addition**

After the learning tour, Greenthumb began value addition activities. Five group members have attended a total of 120 hours' worth of theoretical and practical training in value addition, organised by Vijabiz, with a further training course planned with the KeMFRI. In its first attempt, the group produced three packets of fish sausages, ten kg of filleted fish and five packets of fish meatballs. After the first trial members realised that they would not make profits immediately. They produced less than 40% of what was anticipated, due to a lack of appropriate equipment. The manual processes of filleting and preparing fish sausages took up much more time.

Nevertheless, the first trial was a step up, where none of the members had any knowledge on value addition and group dynamics would have resulted in disagreements about responsibilities. The trained group members did take up their roles as trainers in the group, training the rest of the members and increasing the group's capacity. We pooled financial resources to buy more fish for processing and Greenthumb is raising funds to be able to purchase adequate equipment through Vijabiz project grants. One uncertainty Greenthumb is still facing is the impact of the ongoing country-wide ban on plastics, and how it might affect the plastic packaging of their fish products as they venture into the market.

### **What's next?**

Youth in Umoja 2, in Nakuru county and indeed, the entire country, can be unproductive and have little faith in each other and local government authorities in matters around farming. Greenthumb however has found that with innovative fish farming methods and capacity building efforts by local government and private organisations, youth are eager and willing to realise their dreams in agribusiness. The entrepreneurship and ICT training and learning tours have started the transformation of the youth group to a fish production and value addition enterprise.

As Greenthumb continues to develop its fish processing activities, we will provide a market for fish farmers in the region who struggle to sell their fish. As we wait to harvest our own fish, we can add value to bought fish. Greenthumb will also expand our fish production capacity by introducing cage farming in a larger pond, that will be harvested on a monthly basis. This will maintain a steady stream of income and enable other youth from the region to participate. It is recommended that youth increase their commitment to work together and take advantage of opportunities availed by local government authorities and organisations such as the USTADI Foundation and CTA. This way, they can build their capacities in the areas of operations and innovations that they are interested in.



#### **James Maina**

Greenthumb CBO, Lanet-Umoja 2 ward, Nakuru county

*E-mail: greenthumbcbo@gmail.com*

*Facebook: Greenthumb CBO*

*Twitter: @greenthumbcbo*

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# A WAKE-UP CALL FOR RURAL YOUTH

*Jamal Kasim and Tom Njogu Kironji*



The Kibaokiche Fish Farmers Youth Group was already engaged in fish farming when it joined the Vijabiz project. After learning about modern methods of fish farming, including using the right breed of fish, improved feeding methods and managing the ponds properly, the group's production increased significantly. Selling 80% of its products in processed form fetched an even higher price. One of the successes of the group has been the number of women who have been able to develop their role in the fisheries business.

*Cover A large number of youths participating in a workshop for commodity value chains organised by CTA and the USTADI Foundation*

**T**he Kibaokiche Fish Farmers Youth Group, working in the Kaloleni sub-county in Kilifi county, has been farming fish since June 2018. Before joining the Vijabiz project, we lacked the skills and knowledge on fish farming practices needed to run a profitable business. We did not have specific know-how on fish varieties, feeding practices and pond management. Our group, comprised of 16 men and nine women, used traditional methods of fish farming, where we reared small numbers of fish that took a long time to mature. It was difficult to find a market for our undersized and poor-quality fish, leading our group to make losses. Vijabiz invited the group for several training courses that changed the fortune of the group. We are now the only youth group in our ward undertaking fish rearing, and it is showing great promise so far.

### **The power of information**

We were already involved in fish farming, so our members were eager to join the business opportunity workshop organised by Vijabiz in Nakuru and an intensive training course on fish farming in Sagana Kirinyiga county in January 2019. Here, we learnt about modern methods of fish farming, including using the right breed of fish, improved feeding methods and pond management.

We were also linked to different markets by the Nakuru County Government Department of Fisheries. Two members of the Kibaokiche group attended the training course, passing on the knowledge to the rest of the group. Part of the training course was a tour of successful fish projects from which we were able to learn from first-hand. This crucial training and learning journey contributed to many changes in our group.

Before Vijabiz we reared poor quality breeds of fish that took time to mature – it could take up to one year, and the fish would be irregular sizes. We now use fast-maturing breeds of tilapia that come from a source verified by the Department of Fisheries. These breeds take around six months to mature, allowing us to harvest and sell our first batch of fish in July 2019. We would like to stock more fish in our ponds, but at the moment we are limited in our capacity to buy quality fish feed. We do know which shops sell the right feed but they are a bit more expensive, which can be a barrier at times.

The quality of this first harvest was also partly due to our improved feeding approach. We now implement a new daily feeding system for our fish, which changes the feeding process and types of feed depending on the different stages of development of the fish. Before, we were under- or overfeeding our fish. Now we know

Before Vijabiz we reared poor quality breeds of fish that took time to mature – it could take up to one year, and the fish would be irregular sizes.

exactly how to determine the right amount of feed: by observing the fish. If we overfeed them, the leftover feed starts polluting the pond, and if we underfeed them, their growth is stunted. Generally, it is said that fish consume about 5% of their weight – so when they grow, we feed them more. But it is a bit more complicated than this, we have learnt. The climate, for example, can influence how much they eat. Also, the fish have other sources of nutrition that they find in the pond. Now we do not just feed them a specific amount based on a calculation, but we pay attention to them. We watch as they respond to the feeding and adapt.

We also make sure we continuously check water and oxygen levels. When water levels are down, we add piped water. This year the rains were late, which meant we needed to buy water, in turn affecting production costs. Higher costs forced us to harvest and sell our fish earlier than expected. Sometimes when there is not enough water, we oxygenate the water that we have. Ponds require a lot of fresh oxygen and this is done by gently splashing the water using tree branches, and running fresh water through the pond. We can tell when to oxygenate a pond by looking at its surface, noticing when the fish are struggling at the surface for too long in search of fresh air.

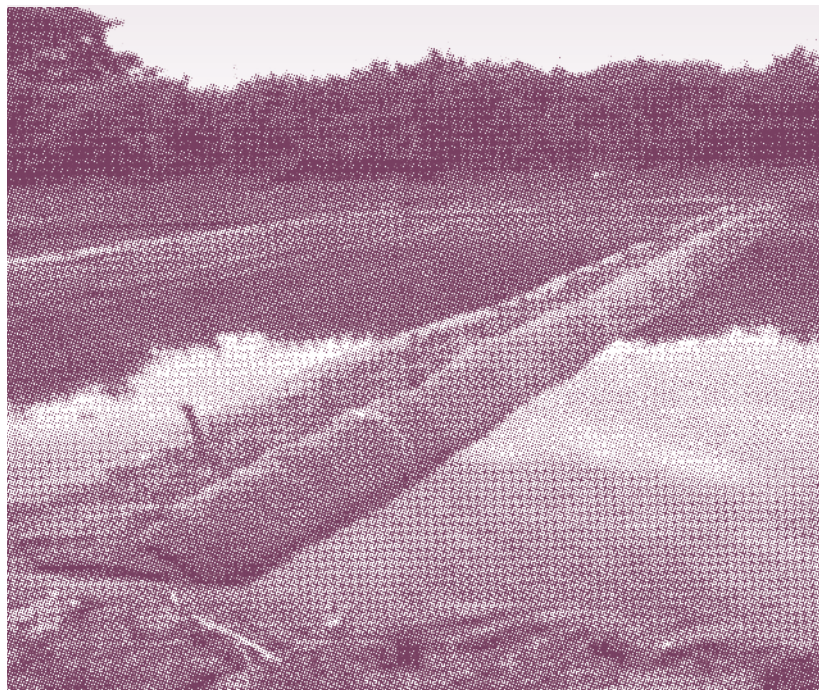
### ***Sales, sales, sales***

With the skills acquired from these training courses, the group's fish harvest in July 2019 was more than 375 kg. Most of the fish was processed into fried and cooked fish for our large customer, the Damview Hotel Mariakani. We also processed the fish into fried fish,

fish balls and fish samosas which two of our members sold on the market. We sold 80% of our products in processed form, selling at an average of KSh 450 (€4) per kg. This is an incredible improvement compared to the price we were fetching for our unprocessed fish: only KSh 220 (€2) per kg.

The group's area of operation and the target market are the local open markets, as well as Kibaokiche High School and hotels in Kaloleni such as Hotel

*Below View of the cage fish farming method*





Damview Hotel Mariakani. Before we sell, we carry out market research to find out who we can target to sell our fish to. Initially, we would sell only 30% of the fish we stocked. Now we sell over 95%, increasing our revenues substantially. This is also because we created awareness in our communities about the products we sell. Through the use of online platforms such as Facebook, we are able to market our fish and widen our market share. Unfortunately, not everyone can afford fish, which still limits the sales we make, but more and more people are interested.

As Kenya has a large market for fish, imported fish from China is widely prevalent. Poor government legislation concerning this market has contributed to their influence in the fish market and is limiting space for small-scale fish businesses like ours. Yet since we are now producing better quality fish, which are big in size and mature fast, we are able to compete with other fish traders in the market.

### **Ripple effects of informed youth**

Group members are now in the process of increasing the number of youth-owned fish ponds. Due to limited finances, acquiring the materials needed for the construction of the fish ponds is taking longer than anticipated but we are optimistic that each member of the group will have their own fish pond in the next two years. The group has been producing fish at a farm it rents which holds two ponds but has recently started leasing a space – paid for with members' contributions – where we plan to construct up to ten ponds. This could boost our production significantly, as a single pond produces approximately 400 kg of fish.

One of the successes of our group is the number of women who have been able to develop their role in the fisheries business. The women in our group have already shown improvement in their living standards and are becoming more independent in economic

matters. Several government policies advocating women's empowerment contributed, like the availability of 0% interest on loans for women. However, it is still a challenge sometimes to see actual implementation of these policies in the face of cultural restrictions and continued male chauvinism.

The Kilifi County Trade and Tourism Department gave us a KSh 100,000 (€915) loan for expanding our business. We managed to utilise the funds efficiently, hence the department selected us to showcase our work to other youth groups. As such, we have been demonstrating to other groups how grants and loans could grow their businesses. Our training on business management was essential for this success.

### **Conclusions and recommendations**

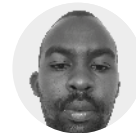
The Kibaokiche Fish Farmers Youth Group is now more empowered to run fish farming as a business: we produce high quality fish and are able to find a market for our produce. Poverty in the country can be reduced through vigorous youth empowerment programmes such as Vijabiz. It would be highly beneficial if Vijabiz and all its partners continue their efforts in empowering rural youth, as it will help many to set up income generating activities which will unlock their financial freedom. We want all youth in the sub-county to realise the benefits of participating in agribusiness. With Vijabiz we are ready to go.



**Jamal Kasim**

Kibaokiche Fish Farmers Youth Group

*E-mail: Jamalkacmu@gmail.com*



**Tom Njogu Kironji**

Youth Awake Bunge

*E-mail: youthawakebyg@gmail.com*

With the skills acquired from these training courses, the group's fish harvest in July 2019 was more than 375 kg.

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# SUSTAINABLY EMPLOYING YOUTH IN THE FISHERIES SECTOR

*Pauline Kache and Sifa Kitsao*



Kilifi Mwelekeo Fisheries Group and Jiinue VI Smart (JIVIS) are two youth groups in Kenya's coastal Kilifi county. They decided to venture into the fisheries business with the support of the Vijabiz project. They buy and sell fish, which they add value to by processing. Taking part in the Vijabiz project gave them exposure to financial institutions and improved their skills in online marketing. They plan to use this as a starting point to grow even more.

*Cover Modern fish farming techniques: youth learning about aquaponics during a learning journey*

The unemployment rate among young people in Kilifi county has been on the rise in the past decades. The area has very few industries that can employ youth, leaving most of them to spend their days on the streets. For some this leads to drug abuse. Literacy levels are low, with a high number of school drop-outs. To counter this, two youth groups decided to encourage more members to venture into the fisheries business as a source of income. With Kilifi county having the longest coastline, we were confident that we could get enough fish to meet the demands of local and international markets.

### **The groups and their members**

Kilifi Mwelekeo Fisheries Group and JIVIS are youth groups located in Kibarani ward and Sokoni ward respectively, in Kilifi county. The groups have been in operation since August 2018 with a total combined membership of 35 youths (11 men and 24 women). After the training by Vijabiz, both groups started buying fish from fish bulking points and fish ports, storing the fish in freezers and then selling it to their customers. While JIVIS only deals with fish and fish products, Kilifi Mwelekeo handles all types of seafood. Our groups not only sell these products, but we aim to create awareness about the importance of fish and fish products, and to enhance fish production through new technologies.

Members of the group procure fish from fish bulking centres on a daily basis. Although there is some competition from middlemen and other fish traders, we buy and sell about 200 kg of fish per day. We then add value to the fish: JIVIS makes fish fillets, while Kilifi Mwelekeo packages the fish or, for example, open oysters for those customers who do not know how or want to do this themselves. For example, we sell raw oysters at KSh 30 (€0.30) per piece and when opened, the price increases to KSh 50 (€0.45).

At Kilifi Mwelekeo all members work in the group's business and the profits made per month are shared equally among them. JIVIS, just two months old in the fish trade business, now employs six of its members and plans to scale up and employ all of its members in the coming months. This has been possible because we have had training organised by the USTADI Foundation through the Vijabiz project, which has equipped us with relevant skills in agribusiness. A total of 22 youth from both groups were trained and were able to impart these skills to other group members. However, we have had some challenges; Vijabiz recommended that two members join a training course, and then give opportunities to other members to join other training. Yet, this did not work out as expected as some of the members who joined were illiterate, making it more difficult to share the knowledge gained with the whole group. We discussed



*Right Youth at a fish hatching point during a learning tour*

this issue with Vijabiz staff, trying to correct this approach for the future.

The trainings were offered for free, which allowed some of our members to take part who otherwise could not have afforded to do so. Their eagerness to learn was an important element of the training's effectiveness. All of us are involved in the fish business and are interested to gain more knowledge to help us improve our work. When selecting the members who attended the training courses, we considered their availability and ability to train others on what they had learnt. Since we are all in the same boat, opportunities for training are shared in a fair way so every member benefits. Afterwards, it helped that the government offers support, specifically in the fisheries sector with project funding for youth groups.

### **Mobilising resources**

We are linked to four financial institutions which assist us with credit and information on financial management. Taking part in the Vijabiz project gave us exposure to these institutions. We are also able to finance ourselves through the sales of our goods, which are attractive to our clients because we sell them for relatively affordable prices. In addition, we have a good relationship with our partners, including the USTADI Foundation, government departments and our external suppliers. All of these links make it easy for both groups to mobilise sufficient resources – both financial and information resources. As such, we have

been able to purchase new equipment with the support from financial institutions and government departments.

Still, it has been an uphill battle for us to access credit from financial institutions because of the tough credit conditions, for instance our lack of collateral which financial institutions require. Nonetheless, our good credit record goes a long way to securing financial support. Another challenge is that we face delays both from our suppliers and delivery to our customers due to poor infrastructure. We are now putting in place plans to acquire our own vehicle to enhance transportation.

### **Market linkages**

By creating new market linkages, we were able to increase our sales from 6 to 7 t/month. The number and variety of buyers has also greatly increased: initially we supplied fish only to individual fish vendors but currently we also sell to three hotels in Kilifi. This has been possible because we had an opportunity to showcase our products in trade shows organised by Vijabiz.

In addition, ICT training improved our skills in online marketing, maximising our profits compared to when we were marketing only by word of mouth. We post our products on our Facebook pages ('Kilifi Mwelekeo Fisheries Group' and 'JIVIS CBO') and on our WhatsApp statuses, which has greatly promoted our businesses and enabled us reach new markets. We also

supply our customers with their orders and update the information about our available products on our Facebook pages, and we keep proper records of our purchases and sales.

ICT has greatly helped in boosting market linkages, although primarily for the people with internet access. For people in remote areas of Kilifi, with limited internet access, we make posters to advertise our products. We continue to be able to sell more to increasing numbers of buyers because we offer quality products and services consistently. We also offer after-sales services, such as free delivery. Satisfied customers then refer us to others, hence increasing our market share despite the stiff competition from other fish traders.

### **Conclusion**

Our youth groups have made great steps in reducing youth unemployment in Kilifi county, one of the areas in Kenya where young people struggle with finding work. We opened up the fisheries sector to them, where they can engage in different steps of the fishery value chain. They have learnt about entrepreneurship, ICTs and value addition, which has helped to propel them forwards.

Our groups have been successful in selling fish bought from bulking centres, but more can be done. We plan to use this as a starting point to grow more, as we want

to start selling more processed products (like packaged fish, opened oysters and filleted fish) and purchase a boat for deep sea fishing, so that we can stop buying all our fish from fishermen. Since our vision is to create employment through youth, we are planning to work with the youth who have fishing skills who could use the boat. These and other plans have been included in our new business plan. We also want to start selling fish feed to fish pond owners and start exporting octopus. We are confident that we can beat other businesses.

We recommend that other youth groups not only venture into the selling of fish but also rear fish as an additional way to supply these products to Kenyans. Rearing fish could be especially lucrative in other areas, where the market for reared fish like tilapia is higher than in Kilifi. Overall, the training courses have had an immense impact on our youth groups, so we welcome more organisations to offer agribusiness trainings to the youth in our county.



**Pauline Kache**

Jiinue VI Smart CBO

*E-mail: Paulinekache3@gmail.com*



**Sifa Kitsao**

Mwelekeo Fisheries group

*E-mail: Skitsao97@gmail.com*

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**Publication  
coordination:**

Ken Lohento, George Mazuri,  
Eric Bosire and Michael Kermah

**Contribution to the  
coordination:**

Jorge Chavez-Tafur, Karemba Mweni,  
Morgan Siguda, Noel Kasololo and  
Folake Koutchade

**Editing:**

Laura Eggens

**Proofreading:**

WREN*media*

**Layout:**

Steers McGillan Eves

**Editorial project  
management:**

Bianca Beks

CTA, June 2020

**EXPERIENCE  
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**CONTACT US**

CTA  
PO Box 380  
6700 AJ Wageningen  
The Netherlands

T +31 317 467100  
F +31 317 460067  
E [cta@cta.int](mailto:cta@cta.int)

 [CTApage](#)  
 [CTAflash](#)

USTADI Foundation office  
Nine Planet Apartments, Kabarnet Road  
P.O. Box 38344-00100  
Nairobi  
Kenya

T +254 712 177 942  
E [info@ustadi.org](mailto:info@ustadi.org)

 [USTADIFndtn](#)  
 [ustadifdtn](#)

